

## Mapping America's Past: a Historical Atlas

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## Book Reviews

*Mapping America's Past: A Historical Atlas*, by Mark C. Carnes and John A. Garraty with Patrick Williams. A Henry Holt Reference Book. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996. 288 pp. Illustrations, graphs, notes, index. \$50.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY BALLARD C. CAMPBELL, NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

Perusing a collection of maps can be fun as well as informative. Carnes and Garraty's historical atlas achieves success on both counts. The book will provide hours of pleasurable reading or browsing. Either approach sheds light on numerous chapters in American history. The volume teaches through both words and visuals. True to its genre, this atlas promotes understanding through the integration of spatial and symbolic representation. The maps in this collection are composed with an eye toward accentuating the significance of their topics. Arcadia Editions, the mapmakers, blended color, cartographic configuration, and variations on scale to produce a handsome set of maps and instructive graphs and figures. This visual creativity is enhanced by the inclusion of paintings and portraits, photographs, and cartoons from the periods depicted. The result rendered a delightful mixture that will entertain and inform.

The Carnes and Garraty atlas introduces each of the 120 double-page visual spreads with a short, tightly written essay. These narratives in effect make the book an illustrated overview of the history of the United States. The subjects range over the landscape of the American past, beginning with the drift of continental plates that formed the North American continent and ending with the congressional election of 1994. The core of the work reviews a wide variety of events and developments, with special attention given to military campaigns and social activities. Included in the latter category are chapters devoted to church architecture in the colonial era, prostitution in late nineteenth-century New York, the path of the 1918 flu pandemic, and the range and incidence of AIDS. This latter emphasis underscores how social subjects have become a staple of historical inquiry.

Although *Mapping America's Past* is national and global in conception, the book offers insights on Iowa history. The Hawkeye state first shows up distinctly in the 1830s with an exhibit on the removal

of northern Indians; the same map depicts the contraction of buffalo in Iowa to the state's northwest region. Subsequent exhibits that include Iowa locate utopian communities during the antebellum era, the frontier in 1850, the westward penetration of railroads in 1860 and 1890, Iowa's rank in literacy (very high) and school expenditures (middling) in 1910, and the distribution of "dry" (anti-liquor) counties in 1915. For the Great Depression years, one can compare Iowa with its sister states on the severity of the droughts of 1934 and 1936, the distribution of airports constructed or improved by the WPA, the vote of the state's congressional delegation on isolation in 1938, and the homicide rate (Iowa was very low). This reverence for life helps to explain Iowa's distaste for capital punishment, the subject of two maps. Arraying information by states allows the reader to place Iowa in context among its sister commonwealths and to gain an appreciation of the regional differences that mark the United States. This informative book would serve well as a supplement to broad courses on American history and as a gift to individuals of any age.

*All Over the Map: Rethinking American Regions*, by Edward L. Ayers, Patricia Nelson Limerick, Stephen Nissenbaum, and Peter S. Onuf. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996. vii, 136 pp. Notes, index. \$35.00 cloth, \$13.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY C. ELIZABETH RAYMOND, UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO

What are we to make of a book on American regions that omits the Middle West? Iowans will find no discussion of themselves or their neighboring states in this compilation of four essays. The first three authors focus on regional identity in the South, the West, and New England, respectively, while Peter Onuf explores the political origins of regionalism. Nonetheless, the collection has its rewards for neglected midwesterners.

The central premise of the essays in *All Over the Map* (which, despite its title, features not a single map) is that regions are a persistent and significant feature of American identity. The authors are interested in exploring why this is so, why, as Ayers and Onuf state in the introduction, "some cultural distinctions come to matter, while so many do not, in the construction of collective identities" (8). Rejecting geographic determinism, which suggests that regions are inherent and unchanging divisions that derive from physical landscape, they submit instead that regions are contextual, that they developed in response to American nationalism.

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